REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated July 21, 2006. Claims 7 to 15 are in the application. Claims 1, 13, 14 and 15 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 7, 9 to 11 and 13 to 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 4,205,267 (Williams); Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Williams in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,212,451 (Werner); and Claim 12 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Williams in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,835,461 (Snelling). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The present invention is directed to measuring electric potential. Among other features of the invention, an oscillating body is axially supported by a support member such that the oscillating body oscillates about the support member, at least one detection electrode is provided on the oscillating body, and a distance between the detection electrode and an electric potential measuring object disposed facing the detection electrode is varied by causing the oscillating body to oscillate. In this way, the present invention can allow for greater design flexibility in measuring electric potential, while providing accurate measurement results.

Referring specifically to the claims, independent Claim 7 defines an electric potential measuring device. The device comprises a support member, an oscillating body axially supported by the support member such that the oscillating body oscillates about the support member, and at least one detection electrode provided on the oscillating body. The device also comprises means for varying a distance between the detection electrode and an electric potential measuring object disposed facing the detection electrode by causing the

oscillating body to oscillate, and signal detecting means connected to the detection electrode for detecting an output signal.

Independent Claim 13 is directed to an electric potential measuring device generally corresponding to the device of Claim 7, but more specifically comprises a pair of detection electrodes provided on the oscillating body, wherein the oscillating body is caused to oscillate such that when one of the pair of detection electrodes comes close to the electric potential measuring object, the other one of the pair of detection electrodes goes away from the electric potential measuring object.

Independent Claims 14 and 15 are directed to electric potential measuring methods generally corresponding to Claims 7 and 13, respectively.

The applied reference is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of independent Claims 7, 13, 14 and 15, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the features of an oscillating body axially supported by a support member such that the oscillating body oscillates about the support member, at least one detection electrode provided on the oscillating body, and varying a distance between the detection electrode and an electric potential measuring object disposed facing the detection electrode by causing the oscillating body to oscillate.

In contrast, Williams is seen to disclose an electrostatic voltmeter in which electrodes 32 and 34 are fixed to a vibrator means 36 secured to a housing 24. (column 3, lines 58 to 64 of Williams). Electrodes 32 and 34 are vibrated to vary the amount of electrode operative surface that is exposed through an opening 28 to a test surface 20 being measured. (column 4, lines 9 to 13). Specifically, "the operative surface of each electrode 32, 34 is disposed in a plane generally parallel to the plane of opening 28 in probe

operative surface 26 and is vibrated in that plane." (column 4, lines 13 to 16). Williams discloses that the plane of opening 28 is parallel to the plane of test surface 20. (See Figure 2 (showing a side view of Williams' sensor)). Thus, Williams is seen to disclose that electrodes 32 and 34 are vibrated in a plane parallel to test surface 20. (See also, Figures 3A, 3B and 3C (showing three views facing the probe operative surface 26 of Williams' sensor, and illustrating the motion of electrodes 32 and 34 from right to left in the plane of opening 28)). Accordingly, Williams is not seen to disclose or to suggest an oscillating body axially supported by a support member such that the oscillating body oscillates about the support member, at least one detection electrode provided on the oscillating body, and varying a distance between the detection electrode and an electric potential measuring object disposed facing the detection electrode by causing the oscillating body to oscillate.

The remaining cited references, namely Werner and Snelling, are not seen to cure the deficiencies of Williams, either alone or in any permissible combination. Accordingly, independent Claims 7, 13, 14 and 15 are believed to be allowable.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims and are believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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